





# STUDIES

## in the Spirituality of Jesuits



Integration of Christian Practices:  
A Western Christian Looks East  
by

Daniel J. O'Hanlon, S.J.

Published by the American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality,  
especially for American Jesuits working out their *aggiornamento*  
in the spirit of Vatican Council II

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consists of a group of Jesuits from various provinces who are listed below. The members were appointed by the Fathers Provincial of the United States.

The Purpose of the Seminar is to study topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and to communicate the results to the members of the Assistancy. The hope is that this will lead to further discussion among all American Jesuits--in private, or in small groups, or in community meetings. All this is done in the spirit of Vatican Council II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original charismatic inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the changed circumstances of modern times. The members of the Seminar welcome reactions or comments in regard to the topics they publish.

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# INTEGRATION OF CHRISTIAN PRACTICES

## A WESTERN CHRISTIAN LOOKS EAST

by

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### Introductory Considerations

A short decade ago, when I was in my early fifties, after well over thirty years as a Jesuit, I began to be interested in enriching my prayer and meditation, indeed my whole process of human and spiritual growth, through contact with traditional Asian psychospiritual paths. Here is a description of what that experience has been like for me, and how I have been integrating into my life disciplines and attitudes from the ancient practices of the East, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism.

Several years ago I wrote a long scholarly article which dealt with some of these questions.<sup>1</sup> It was an article lengthy in size but limited in scope, a specialized study on the relation between Zen practice and the *Spiritual Exercises*. The present article will cover some of the same ground, though it will not be so clear, clean, and objective. For I will not be standing back and looking at two distinct modes in the abstract, but taking on the far more difficult task (for me at least) of describing my own personal experience. Now that experience of mine contains a great deal more than the spiritual practice of the Ignatian *Exercises* and the practice of Zen. It is a much more complicated web.

Past experience has given me a considerable distrust of autobiographies, at least my own. The selective character of memory, how much the account is colored by the kind of person one is, and the kind of issues one is concerned with at the time of writing are well-known biasing factors. Perhaps what I am writing here reveals just as much of who and what I am right now as of myself at any time described in the past tense. Nevertheless, I will be trying to give as faithful an account as I can.

If I were a *former* Christian, a *former* Catholic, a *former* priest, or a *former* professor at a Jesuit school of theology, this would be a different

kind of account. But I look on what has been happening to me in recent years as an integration of spiritual resources from other traditions into my ongoing life as a Jesuit. I am happy to report that the recent directives of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) provide me with encouragement and support in this project.<sup>2</sup>

This kind of enrichment of spiritual practice and growth through ongoing contact with Eastern modes is not yet a widespread phenomenon in the Church. Even among my two dozen or so colleagues on the full-time permanent faculty of the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley in which I teach, no one, with one or two possible exceptions, has to my knowledge significantly experienced the impact of Eastern modes of prayer and meditation. Nor have the scriptures or the theology of these ancient traditions had any discernible impact on their theology.

At the same time, I am not aware of any objections or opposition from my colleagues to what I am doing, writing, and teaching. On the contrary, they encourage me and seem to be glad of the direction my life and work have taken. Of course, there is a little friendly kidding about it now and then.

### Ecumenical Exchange

In a way, then, I am living somewhere on the boundary--within the Catholic Church, for that is my spiritual home and base, but significantly stimulated and nourished by what lies outside the edge of the Christian community. To help you understand how I experience this way of being and how I make sense of it for myself, let me briefly explain how I understand the process of ecumenical exchange. Within the Christian community the word *ecumenical* is normally used to refer to relations among various Christian groups, and the word *interreligious* is used to refer to relations of Christians with other religious traditions. Here I am using the word *ecumenical* in its larger, more popular sense as referring to all fruitful exchange among any and all religious traditions. What I see happening in authentic ecumenical exchange is that the partners listen in openness to each other, hearing what is said, tuning in on the "melody" as well as the words, allowing themselves to be receptive to what the other says, does, values, and believes. The partners seek to try on not only the words and ideas but also the practices and experiences of the other, as far as that is possible. In authentic ecumenical dialogue each partner comes principally



in order to learn. The teaching which takes place may be considerable, but in the ecumenical context it is not planned--it simply happens. Each partner shares as fully as possible his deepest experiences and values. The other listens and allows what comes from the partner to bring forth new personal possibilities which may heretofore have gone unrecognized and undeveloped. The Zen Buddhist does not cease to be a Zen Buddhist, nor does the Lutheran Christian cease to be a Lutheran. What happens, rather, is that unsuspected possibilities which may have lain dormant begin to come to life in both partners.

Now there may be those in every tradition who feel that they have actualized in themselves all the possibilities that lie within their tradition. For such persons, if and where they exist, ecumenical dialogue understandably may have little interest. But if one is convinced that the personal and collective history of each one of us takes place within a limited cultural context, and that one should be grateful for the stimulus from other traditions which awaken to life in us possibilities previously unrealized, then ecumenical dialogue is eminently desirable and valuable. Of course, if the tradition in which one lives is a closed one, and there are aspects of reality to which it is not allowed to be open, ecumenical dialogue can be a disturbing threat. For those whose tradition is more open, ecumenical dialogue is the most natural and welcome thing in the world. Indeed, one of the qualities any tradition must have, if it hopes to survive and be a source of life and growth, is rootage in some universal human reality. It is fidelity to this core which provides the corrective for errors and distortions that are found at other levels of the tradition and which leaves it open to the constant conversion, growth, and enrichment which ecumenical exchange provokes.

#### My Prenovitiage Catholic Experience

I was born into a Catholic family. Both my mother and my father were regular and serious in their religious practice. It was important enough for them so that they chose to live only a block away from the parish and school. Sunday Mass was an unquestioned part of our lives, as were regular confession, evening prayers in the home, and involvement in the activities of the parish. The parish priest felt at home in our house. All seven children, of which I was the second-oldest, attended the Catholic elementary

school, and two of my sisters became, and still are, nuns, one a nurse and the other a teacher.

I did not think of myself as devout, and quite regularly repudiated efforts to recruit me for the priesthood. None of these efforts, by the way, came from my parents. They never tried to persuade me in that direction. When I finally did make that decision, however, at the age of eighteen, they were quite content with it.

My early years then, were not spent principally on the boundary, but well into the heartland of American Roman Catholicism during the 1920's. Probably my earliest awareness that there *were* boundaries and that other ways of religious life existed came when I was about nine years old and the Hoover-Al Smith Campaign stirred up a lot of anti-Catholic sentiment in the dominantly Protestant Southern California city in which I grew up. The neighborhood Protestant kids would shout insulting taunts, picked up presumably from their parents; and even earlier than that--something I don't remember but was told about--the Ku Klux Klan burned a cross on our front lawn one night. At twelve I began four years in the local public high school, and though I remember no hostility or unkindness during those years, it was clear that the world I was in was a Protestant world.

Yet, with all this, my parents, though openly and uncompromisingly Catholic, were not anti-Protestant. This, as I look back, was something which in the circumstances one could not have simply presumed.

At sixteen I left home to attend Loyola University, then a struggling Jesuit institution of well under five hundred students. Here I was thrown into ongoing contact with the Jesuit community. I was also introduced during those years to annual "retreats," which were events of two or three days involving the whole school, and very similar to the retreat described by James Joyce in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. A heavy stress was laid on sin and the endlessness of hell for those who die in the state of mortal sin. Even without all of that, I grew up with a keen sense of the fragility and impermanence of human existence and the unpredictability and finality of death. I was always searching for something safe and everlasting. At the same time, I was a lively, good-humored, and very active child and youth. At the end of two years of college I decided, largely, I think, as a safe insurance policy for my eternal life, to enter the Jesuit order. I decided to finish off the final two years of college first.



Then, at age twenty, in August of 1939, I entered the Jesuit novitiate at Los Gatos, California.

### Experiences after Entering the Society of Jesus

The thirty days of the Long Retreat were a profound experience for me. I became deeply absorbed in the Exercises and found that significant transformations took place within me. I shed copious tears and became so fully caught up in the whole experience that the director got a bit worried that I was too serious, too intent, too strained. Perhaps I was. In any case, as I look back, it seems to me that two important things were happening. First of all, God and his Spirit and especially the person of Jesus took on a different kind of reality in my awareness. They jumped out of their two-dimensional reality into three dimensions. They came alive for me. They became real. They were no longer just like pictures on the wall, but solid persons in the room. Second, there was a shift in my motivation. I do not say that my spiritual outlook ceased to be selfish and concerned with my own happiness, but it began to shift away from my previous absorbing concern for my own eternal welfare. It began to open up with love born of gratitude as I contemplated the person and the life of Jesus.

Many years of Jesuit community life followed, both as a student and as a teacher, with a regular round of early rising (5:00 a.m.), a morning hour of meditation followed by Mass, classes, study, manual labor, group recreation, and all of this almost exclusively within the total community of a group of Jesuits. The communities I lived in during most of these years, from 1939 until rather recently, were large, usually well over a hundred. I began teaching in 1958, at what was then called Alma College, located in the beautiful and remote forest of the Santa Cruz Mountains. A dozen years later the school moved to Berkeley to become the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, one of the nine schools composing the Graduate Theological Union, the most extensive ecumenical program of theological education anywhere in the world.

Here a new style of life began both for the Jesuit school and for me. The school opened itself to all qualified applicants, men or women, and students from all nine schools, Protestant and Catholic, sat together in the same classes. The shift occurred almost exactly at the time I was suddenly rendered almost inoperative by a heavy depression. I managed

to continue teaching, but with great difficulty. Going to sleep at night was a welcome relief, and waking in the morning was a return to the vague but oppressive anxiety which enclosed me like a heavy fog. Fortunately, there was a place in me deeper than the depression which remained somehow independent of it. The depression was rather like a heavy and uncomfortable garment, full of uneasiness, restlessness, and anxiety, but it was not me. It was a spiritual crisis, not a crisis of faith. When it hit me I turned to a psychiatrist for help; it was the first time in my life that I had felt such a need. He helped mostly by providing a ready ear, assisted by some antidepressant medication. What seemed to cure me of this very unpleasant affliction more than anything else was just time. So during the three or four years from 1969 on I gradually recovered and finally, in 1973, my turn came for a sabbatical year.

#### A Sabbatical Year--and Some Changes

What to do with this splendid opportunity? My concept of a sabbatical year was and is to move as fully as possible into a fresh and different world in order to provoke and awaken personal possibilities unknown even to myself. It is a kind of faith in which I trust that there are good things to be learned and realized, even though I do not quite know what they are. Perhaps this is true of any genuine learning process. In this case, *some* world had to be chosen. To *allow* the rest to happen, some *particular* choice had to be made. I decided to spend the year in India and a few Buddhist countries, and to let myself become as fully involved as possible in their religious experience and practice. This would certainly be a new and fresh world for me. It would at the same time be a natural extension of the many years I had spent in Catholic-Protestant ecumenical sharing.

My travels took me to India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Burma, Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan. For thirteen months I moved along the circuit followed by young Western seekers, living in ashrams, meditation centers, monasteries, temples, Tibetan gompas, and Thai wats; traveling by plane, bus, train, rickshaws of all descriptions, horse-drawn vehicles, bullock carts, and most of all by foot. I took vipassana meditation instruction, got involved in yoga courses, did Zen sesshin, followed monastic routines, chanted bhajans, listened to lectures and dharma talks. I lived with Hindus of various kinds, with Tibetan Buddhists, Sri Lanka



University Buddhist monks and jungle monks, with Thai city monks and forest monks, with lay monastic Buddhists in Burma and Zen practitioners in Japan and Korea. I tried to enter as fully as I could into the Hindu and Buddhist worlds.<sup>3</sup> And much else. It was a year of saturation in the Hindu-Buddhist world.

During this year I was often asked what effect it was having on me, what changes were taking place. I would respond that I couldn't answer that question very well until I was once again in my regular environment. And that turned out to be true. Once back in Berkeley, living once again as part of the Jesuit and graduate theological world, I realized that significant shifts had taken place over the previous thirteen months.

To begin with one of the most obvious changes: After years of constant stomach trouble, and even major surgery in 1964 for peptic ulcer, my health and digestion became better than it had been since I was in my early teens. I became more at ease with myself and others, required less sleep, and had more energy. More people seemed to like me than before. I felt drawn with no special effort to a simpler lifestyle, not as some penitential imposition, but simply because it seemed a better and more delightful way to live. I found it much easier to maintain a regular practice of prayer and meditation. I began to give the theology courses I teach a much larger experimental component. A year later, in fact, in order to be able to include yoga practice as part of a course on Hindu spirituality, I took a six-week live-in yoga teachers' training course.<sup>4</sup> Although the word sounds rather pretentious, I suppose one could call it a conversion experience, a transformation of consciousness, or a new mode of awareness. Not the first one in my life, and hopefully not the last, but nevertheless some kind of shift to a new way of being.

In the seven years since then I have continued to teach such classic courses in systematic theology as the Church, the sacraments, and the theology of the human person, but have taught them with a larger perspective. Besides that, I have added other courses drawing more directly on my experiences of Asian meditative systems. Bit by bit, as I became more confident in these new approaches and practices, I began to experiment with ways of sharing my experience in workshops outside the classroom, and have progressively expanded that kind of activity, while continuing my regular teaching at the Jesuit School.

## Some Psychological and Spiritual Results

Now just what has happened to me psychologically and spiritually? My practice has evolved with elements incorporated from many sources. However, I do not have the feeling of alien practices arbitrarily stuck on, but rather of organic personal growth through the awakening or further development of possibilities which were already there. To illustrate with a particular example, in December of 1973, after I had been in India several months, I did a ten-day vipassana meditation course with a remarkable man by the name of Goenka, a lay Buddhist teacher from Burma. About twelve hours a day were devoted to sitting meditation practice, at times gathered together with him in the meditation hall and at times in our own space. I say space, and not room, since, because of the large number of participants, the majority of them young Westerners, the physical accommodations were very primitive. Along with a couple of others I had a few square feet of space on the solid stone floor of a small curtained-off area of the Benares Burmese Buddhist temple. And that December in Benares was a wintry one. The practice which we worked at hour after hour, day after day, was simply awareness of sensation in our bodies, just attending to these sensations without either clinging to them or pushing them away. That was the basic practice.

Although I had never been taught this kind of practice before, I did not, even at that time, feel it to be in any way out of tune with my previous experience of meditation and prayer. Somewhat later--I don't remember exactly how much later--when I read *The Cloud of Unknowing*<sup>5</sup> for the first time and reread the writings of St. John of the Cross,<sup>6</sup> I found descriptions in a Christian framework of a kind of awareness much like that which was part of the vipassana practice taught by Goenka. Of course, I had learned along the way many other methods of stilling the "monkey mind"<sup>7</sup> and allowing the awareness of inner reality deeper than words or concepts to come alive. But I mention Goenka explicitly because I think those ten days in the cold and drafty Benares Buddhist temple were especially powerful. I gained a better sense of what Buddhism is all about from those ten days of practice than from all the books and lectures I had previously been through. I had begun the sabbatical year with the conviction that direct experience of these religious traditions was the best way to really get to know them, and these ten days confirmed that conviction in me.

Let me illustrate one of the ways in which just that one ten-day



experience changed me. When the ten days were over, I got on a crowded third-class train for Bodh Gaya, an overnight journey eastward from Benares. As frequently happens, there was no place to sleep but on the floor in one of the crowded compartments, and I was lucky to find even that instead of having to sit or stand. Several young Bengali lads on their way back to Calcutta saw me there and began to poke fun at this "old Western hippie." Now one might expect that under the circumstances, trying to sleep on the floor of a moving train after a week and a half of strenuous days sitting in silent meditation, I would find it hard not to answer in kind, or at least be pretty annoyed. What actually happened was that I too found the situation amusing, laughed and joked about it with them; and they ended up sharing their food with me.

But to come back to the connection between my earlier patterns of spiritual practice and the things I learned from the East: I think that the principal new thing for me was the discovery of very simple and effective ways of stilling the agitation of mind and body in order to allow a deeper, wordless kind of awareness to come alive.

My earliest training in meditation had been in accordance with the meaning given to that word in the Eastern Christian tradition, a meaning significantly different from that given the word today in the West when it is used more or less as a translation of the Sanskrit *dhyana*. When we hear, for instance, of "transcendental meditation" and see notices posted around university centers and "new age" hangouts about teachers of meditation, it is a practice akin to *dhyana* that is usually meant, a practice that involves putting aside thoughts and reasonings. But my earliest beginnings in meditation were along the lines described by the Carthusian Guigo II, ninth prior of the Grand Chartreuse, who died in 1188. He tells us:

Reading comes first and is as it were the foundation; it provides the subject matter which we must use for meditation. Meditation considers more carefully what is to be sought after; it digs (Prov 2:4) as it were for treasures which it finds (Matt 14:44) and reveals, but since it is not in meditation's power to seize upon the treasure, it directs us to prayer. Prayer lifts up to God with all its strength and begs for the treasure which it longs for, which is the sweetness of contemplation. Contemplation when it comes rewards the labors of the other three; it inebriates the thirsting soul with the dew of heavenly sweetness. Reading is an exercise of the outward senses, meditation is concerned with the inward understanding, prayer is concerned with desire, contemplation outstrips every faculty. The first degree

is proper to beginners, the second to proficient, the third to devotees, the fourth to the blessed.<sup>8</sup>

### Western and Eastern "Meditation"

Two differences are to be noted between this practice of meditation and meditation as usually taught in the Eastern traditions. First, the method with which I began was one which started with words; usually, but not necessarily texts of Scripture. The goal was to come to the simple wordless state which Guigo calls contemplation, but the starting point was words and ideas. Second, the "arousing of affections" like sorrow for sin, gratitude, adoration, and most especially love was very important, and much more deliberately cultivated than in most Eastern meditation practice. There are exceptions, of course. Several which come to mind are the strong bhakki tradition in Hindu piety, the cultivating of absolute trust in Pure Land Buddhism, and the beautiful Buddhist practice of metta, or loving-kindness meditation. But in comparison with Western Christian practice, Eastern practice gives much more attention to awareness than to the "affections."

I made two new discoveries through contact with Asian practice. First, I found that one can move toward the goal of prayer, beyond just words and concepts, without necessarily *beginning* with words and concepts. I discovered that by such simple things as watching my breath, observing sensations in my body, practicing hatha yoga with emphasis on simple immediate awareness, and chanting or silently repeating a mantra with no attention paid to analysis of the words, it was possible to move into the later stages of the process Guigo described. My first discovery, then: One does not *need* to begin with words or ideas.

My second discovery was that it is possible to allow love to simply emerge out of awareness, without making its cultivation the first object of concern. Note what I am saying here: not that love is unimportant, not that its direct cultivation is a poorer path to follow, but that there are other ways to go as well. In the East great attention is paid to awareness, free of clinging to what is there or trying to get rid of it. More attention is given to this simple awareness, this bare immediate attention, than to the direct cultivation or excitation of feelings and desires. This practice seems to spring out of the conviction that love and compassion are the natural movement of our true self. When the surface



mind and disordered desires are still, the true self awakens without need of any further assistance from us. Indeed, our clumsy efforts to poke at it and deliberately rouse it often have the same effect as poking at a sea anemone. It simply closes up tight. But give it stillness, leave it undisturbed, and it opens wide like a water lily in full bloom.

There is a parable of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark which I think carries the same message: "The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed upon the ground. He goes to bed and gets up day after day. Through it all the seed sprouts and grows without him knowing how it happens. The earth produces of itself first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark 4:26-28). There is a Christian parallel to this primacy given in much Eastern prayer or meditation to awareness. It is the primacy of faith over love. Not a primacy of importance, of course, since "the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor. 13:13), but a certain primacy in the order of occurrence. There is a strong Christian theological tradition which teaches that faith is the foundation out of which love grows. Once we *see* differently, once we somehow mysteriously see divine reality as it is, love follows as warmth follows the light of the sun. To try to force love when there is no seeing of the reality out of which it grows can be disastrous.

As I continued to enrich my life of prayer and meditation with Eastern resources, I found that there were many effective ways of entering into it without beginning with words, and that the direct practice of simple immediate awareness released in me without further effort such "affective" fruits as compassion, love, patience, and empathy.

### Aiding Others toward Similar Experiences

In trying to help others toward this kind of experience, I find that one of the most common difficulties devout Christians have is the feeling that such elementary, seemingly nonreligious, and "psychological" practices as watching the breath or observing sensations in the body cannot be prayer or contemplation. I have found in working with people that after some days of this kind of practice in a longer workshop, the problem usually disappears of itself. Before the person makes the inner discovery, explanations are only minimally helpful, but here is one that sometimes at least allows people to temporarily put aside some mental blockages against

this kind of practice. The explanation is adapted from several pages of an excellent book by an Indian Jesuit, Father Anthony de Mello,<sup>9</sup> who, among his many other experiences, did the same ten-day course with Goenka which I mentioned earlier.

He presumes that, for a Christian, contemplation is communicating with God that makes minimal use of words, images, and concepts, or that dispenses with them altogether. When I practice awareness of breathing or of body sensations, I can truly say, De Mello asserts, that I am communicating with God. But how? This explanation presumes what many Christian mystics tell us, namely, that there is a part of us within which is able to know God directly, to grasp and intuit him in his very being, though in a dark manner apart from all thoughts and concepts and images. Father de Mello suggests that we might call this faculty "the Heart," though we are not speaking of ordinary affectivity.<sup>10</sup> In most of us "the Heart" lies dormant and undeveloped. If awakened and released, it would move by the gravity of its being toward God. But for this to happen, it needs to be freed from the encumbrance<sup>11</sup> of all those thoughts and words and images which we constantly interpose between ourselves and God when we are communicating with him. A silent gaze is often the deepest communication. But what do I gaze at when I gaze silently at God? An imageless, formless reality. A blank. Such an enterprise is a formidable challenge for us. Indeed, the project is quite impossible for most of us unless we can silence our busy mind. Just as the blind person develops a special sensitivity of touching and hearing, so the blinding of our endlessly curious and chattering mind allows another faculty of communicating with God to develop. After all, as the mystics tell us, the Heart is by its very nature always straining to move towards God if only given a chance to do so.

But what the Heart first seems to find is emptiness and blankness. Too frequently when we get a taste of this we feel we are doing nothing, wasting our time, and so we escape back into the familiar world of our busy mind. We return to the world of words and ideas which we are used to. After some practice and experience, or perhaps simply by natural disposition, some people are blessed with an utter distaste for thinking and words in prayer. There are two ways of responding to this development. We can give it all up because the choice of trying to think is too frustrating and being in the darkness seems a waste of time. But, and here I use De Mello's own



words, "if they avoid this evil and persevere in the exercise of prayer and expose themselves, in blind faith, to the emptiness, the darkness, the idleness, the nothingness, they will gradually discover, at first in small flashes, later in more permanent fashion, that there is a glow in the darkness, that the emptiness mysteriously fills their heart, that the idleness is full of God's activity, that in the nothingness their being is recreated and shaped anew, and all of this in a way they just cannot describe to themselves or to others."<sup>12</sup>

Now the first step most people need to take in order to draw close to this mystical darkness and begin to communicate with God through the Heart is to find some means for silencing the mind. There may be nothing one can do directly in order to develop the Heart. All that can be done is to silence the discursive mind. But how?

It is an extremely difficult task. The mind demands *something* to fasten on. Very well then, give it something, just *one* thing. One may use an ikon on which to fix the gaze, or perhaps the name of Jesus. The time may come when the ikon or the name disappears from consciousness, when the discursive mind is perfectly stilled, and one's Heart is free to gaze, unimpeded, into the darkness.

Now these two devices, the ikon and the name, are both overtly religious in form. But note that in this kind of prayer they are not there *for themselves*, but simply as a means to still the busy mind so the Heart can awaken. Is it necessary, then, for *this* purpose, that what one concentrates on be something religious? Why not a leaf, or a spot on the floor?

Which leads us to the odd conclusion that concentrating on the breathing or the body sensations can bring about contemplation in the strict sense of the word: communication of the Heart directly with God in the luminous darkness.

Such, in brief, is the explanation De Mello gives of how watching the breath can bring about true contemplation for the Christian. But his advice earlier in the book is probably even more valuable: When asked what benefit can come from this kind of practice, he gives an answer similar to the one Jesus gave to several of his first disciples when they asked about him. "Come and see," Jesus said. "Don't ask questions," De Mello says. "Do what you are asked and you will discover the answer for yourself. So get to work . . . and before long you will *experience* the answer to your question."

Yes, that is true. But at first this is a hard saying for most Westerners; from what I have seen, harder for men than for women, and harder for academics than for nonacademics.

### Some Thoughts on Prayer without Words

In trying to understand why many Christians, including some authors of books on prayer, are so suspicious of prayer without words or concepts, I have come up with the following explanations. Take them for what they are worth. First, we all share a strong rationalistic bias, especially those of us who live in the technologically developed nations, and whose minds have been formed to a greater degree than we realize by the rationalism of the Enlightenment. Those of us who work with words and concepts are more affected by these forces than others. We almost identify reason and intelligence. So what cannot be captured with words or concepts seems a priori a bit suspect. In practice, theologians seem no less affected by this hidden presumption than their secular colleagues in academia. Despite their orthodox assertions that we touch the reality of God through faith, which is a dimension of our being different from feelings, images, or even the most intense reasoning process, one often has the impression that in practice, even in the practice of prayer and meditation, the use of reason, not faith, is the only really safe and solid ground. This may come from an unconscious identification of faith with an assent to specific official and orthodox formulations. Actually, it is God himself that faith reaches out to and somehow mysteriously touches, not some image, concept, or word. That is why faith, along with hope and love, is called a *theo*-logical virtue.

A second explanation for the widespread suspicion of wordless prayer goes back to the condemnation of Quietism in the seventeenth century. Most Catholic treatises on prayer since that time manifest a fear of empty idleness at prayer. The practical conclusion which is usually drawn is that one must begin prayer with the activity of the mind, meditating on words. Unless this is done, one runs the danger of simply allowing the mind to float in lazy daydreaming. Now this is a legitimate enough fear if there is no alternative between sitting passively and turning to words and thoughts. But what these treatises seem not to have considered, or been aware of, is that there are other ways of avoiding woolgathering besides turning back to words and ideas. There is, in other words, such a thing as a *disciplined*



idleness of the mind. This discipline is in such practices as bringing the mind to one-pointedness through immediate awareness of breath, body sensations, and the like.

What results from this practice, properly pursued, is what William McNamara calls "magnetic mobilizing peace." He cites the fourteenth-century English mystic Walter Hilton: "This restful travail is far from fleshy idleness and from blind security. It is full of ghostly work; but it is called rest . . . an holy idleness and a rest most busy."<sup>13</sup> In her teaching of sensory awareness, Charlotte Selver often makes a similar point. She inveighs against relaxation which is dead lumpish passivity. And it is common wisdom among teachers of meditation that body and mind should be both relaxed *and* alert. In my own prayer and meditation I do not experience these varied practices, kataphatic (with words or images) and apophatic (without them), as in conflict with each other, but rather as complementary and mutually enriching.

#### Other Westerners in the East

Which leads me to note that in my "turning East" I found myself in a situation quite different from almost all of the hundreds of young Westerners I met along the spiritual seekers' trail in Asia--and in the United States, too, for that matter. In almost every instance they fell into one of two categories. Either they had found their early involvement with Western religion--Jewish, Catholic, or Protestant--to be empty ritualism, or they had found it painfully oppressive. But they did have spiritual yearnings. So eventually they found themselves on the road east. This meant that they were searching for some spiritual base to take the place of what had failed to serve them in the past. There were exceptions, of course, and I have the impression that in the 1980's a growing number of young people, not quite so young any more, maybe now in their 30's or even 40's, are re-discovering their original roots. This happens often, they tell me, through the very practices they learned from Hindu or Buddhist teachers. But this is not a large phenomenon even now, and in the 70's I hardly noticed it at all. For most of the fellow seekers I met on the Asian circuit, the practices they learned *were* their religion.

I mention all this in order to point out that this was not the case for me. For better or worse, my life has remained within the Christian and Catholic context over all its sixty-two years up to the present. And my

search was not a phony one, not a missionary ploy or an apologist's gimmick. It was and still is a real search, but within a context and within a tradition which has continuing search and growth as part of its essence. I felt no need to cease to be a Christian or a Catholic, or in any way to diminish that reality, as I allowed my association with Hindus and Buddhists to enrich my experience of reality.

I have been writing about the ways in which my early practice of meditation, à la Guigo II, was enriched through contact with the East by the practice of meditation in a sense closer to that intended by the Sanskrit word *dhyana*, and described in the Christian tradition by such writings as *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the words of St. John of the Cross. Indeed, such Christian practice is described at least as early as the late fourth century with Gregory of Nyssa, and then a bit later very strongly in Pseudo-Dionysius.

### Contemplation of Jesus

There is another part of my early spiritual practice which has been and remains essential for me, a part which might seem to raise further difficulties of integration. I mean that part of spiritual practice which focuses on the person of Jesus, and especially the practice of what St. Ignatius of Loyola, in his *Spiritual Exercises*, calls "contemplation." Here again, as with "meditation," lest we misunderstand what is being said, we need to attend to different meanings of the word. The basic meaning of the Latin word *contemplari* is simply "to gaze at, to look at." Thomas Merton and many others use the word to designate a simple direct awareness, beyond words or concepts, of the divine presence within ourselves or in the world around us. Ignatius uses the word in a somewhat different sense, but one very clearly related to its original meaning. For him, a "contemplation" is an exercise in which one allows oneself to be present in imagination in a scene, a "mystery," from the life of Jesus, seeing, hearing, conversing. We might call it fantasy or visualization, just being in the scene, seeing and becoming involved in what goes on. The Jungian tradition calls this "active imagination."<sup>14</sup>

This is the exercise most extensively employed in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, and it was this practice, more than any other, which, back in 1939, made the month-long experience of the *Exercises*



so powerful for me. It is one thing to talk about Jesus, to read about him, and verbally--even with one's deliberate mind--to profess faith in his present reality as the Risen Lord. It is another thing, through the sustained practice of "contemplation," in which the intuitive act of faith comes alive, to *realize* all this with direct, three-dimensional immediacy. From the psychological point of view, there is nothing here which cannot be found in Eastern practices as well. Tibetan Buddhist practice, for instance, gives a large place to complex and powerful visualizations. Theologically one could discuss what kind of reality to attribute to this Christian experience. Is it illusory fantasy? Is it simply a useful device for stimulating human growth? Could its effects be as easily achieved with other forms of imagery? Does it really put us in touch with Jesus through his Spirit as a living reality in our lives? But these are questions which cannot be answered by appeal to "reasonable arguments." They are matters which are similar to the state-specific sciences which Charles Tart has described.<sup>15</sup> A theologian as confident in the powers of human reason as St. Thomas Aquinas taught that one can never rationally prove such things to be true. All that ordinary reasoning can do is answer the difficulties of those who claim such reality to be impossible.<sup>16</sup> For one outside the "state of consciousness" we call faith, the assertions of someone in that "state" might seem ridiculous. But to another person who is also in the "state" of faith, these assertions could seem obvious.

### Apprenticeships under Various Teachers

During my years of involvement with Eastern religious practice I have had many teachers, and I think I have learned something from them all. At no time have I made that kind of commitment to a teacher which critics of exaggerated guru-worship rightly condemn. But I have learned something which has often been forgotten in Western spiritual practice, namely, that I can "apprentice" myself in greater or lesser degree to someone who is in some respect more advanced than I am. That may sound obvious, but it is a principle whose practice tends to be regarded with suspicion in the West when it comes to spiritual growth. We easily admit this principle if we are learning how to ski or to speak French, but we are afraid of it when it comes to spiritual growth. Maybe this fear comes from a time when unconditional obedience to one's spiritual director was expected simply

because that person happened to be one's director. Nowadays the emphasis tends to be on "a friendly exchange between equals in order to discover the movement of the Spirit in our lives." It seems difficult for us to acknowledge that there may well be persons who have traveled farther than we have along the path, and can guide us through those places which they have successfully passed through but which are still unfamiliar to us. In this sense, anyone who is in any way more advanced than I can become my guru. In those matters in which I am more advanced, I am the guru. Nothing magical or authoritarian about that.

Perhaps another reason for this uneasiness about gurus in Western spiritual practice is the failure to recognize that there are identifiable skills and methods for dealing with problems that arise in the spiritual life. If one has successfully worked with them, one knows rather specifically what to prescribe for others when particular problems arise. If we pretend that all we need to do is be open in a general way to the guidance of the Spirit, then specific advice coming from one more experienced, suggesting what to try in a particular situation, has very little point. It is certainly true that sharing as an equal with another person can be very helpful in enabling us to detect the movement of the Spirit within. But describing our practice and presenting our questions to someone who, out of rich experience and more advanced awareness, can give us inspiration and concrete suggestions is even better. Furthermore, for those of us who live in an environment in which distorted values are constantly thrust upon us, the help of such a person is even more precious.

#### Too Active? Too Passive?

Which raises another question frequently posed to people like myself who draw on Eastern religious resources: Are these not religious systems which claim that we can automatically produce whatever results we wish by employing the right practice or combination of practices? Where is there a place for grace? What happens to the gift freely given and not earned or created by me? My own discovery is that in some ways Eastern practice, even if it does not use the word, has a larger place for grace than the actual practice of some Western Christians. In most Eastern practice there is a great stress on "allowing," "letting be," "wu wei." Our own aggressive interference is the great enemy. We do need to "strive diligently," but the



striving, paradoxically, is to let go of our own small ego. When enlightenment, or whatever it is called, comes to us in whatever degree, it is not something we seize or construct with our own small energies, but something which happens to us, something given to us. It is grace.

Strangely enough, the opposite charge, namely that Eastern ways are too passive, is also made, sometimes by the same persons who complain that it is a process of lifting oneself up by one's bootstraps. This charge is usually accompanied by the assertion that Eastern ways are too inward, too narcissistic, too lacking in social concern. Whether this situation is a logical outgrowth of Hinduism or of Buddhism is quite another question. One might with similar logic say, for instance, looking at the Christian West, that violence and technological devastation are natural consequences of the teachings of Jesus. But if inwardness and quiet naturally lead to lack of concern for social justice, how do we explain the fact that among the Society of Friends, the Quakers, as we usually call them, quiet inwardness and an unrelenting passion for peace and justice go hand in hand? There is certainly a spurious narcissistic kind of ego-centered inwardness, just as there is a frenetic kind of activism which surrounds itself with agitation, restlessness, and subtle forms of evasion and sometimes violence. It may well be true that the first temptation is more common in the East and the second more common in the West. All the more reason for us to learn from each other, to counterbalance the distortions to which each of us is liable.<sup>17</sup>

### Discernment of Spirits

A central issue in Christian spirituality, and particularly in the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola, goes under the name of "discernment of spirits." How do we really come to know ourselves with that subtle kind of awareness which distinguishes between "good spirits" and "bad spirits"? Without this kind of discernment we are exposed to all kinds of delusions and foolishness. Indeed, one of the most consistent accusations Jesus makes against his opponents, especially in the Gospel of St. John, is that they are blind while claiming all the while that they see, solicitous about the motes in other people's eyes while carrying around a beam in their own. Many of the exercises in the book of Ignatius are directly aimed at unmasking illusions and helping the seeker to see himself as he is. I think that what I have learned from Eastern disciplines has helped me to see

and know myself better. Indirect methods of self-knowledge and "discernment of spirits" seem to have been more effective for me than head-on "examinations of conscience." When I speak of indirect methods, I refer, for instance, to practices which still the mind, putting aside deliberate trains of thought or self-examination. I suppose it is a way, by letting go of conscious direction of my usual train of thought, to stand back from myself and be able to notice some of the implicit thoughts, desires, and fears which have gone unobserved because they were the hidden energy making the process move. When the process of self-examination is more direct and deliberate, it can, without my realizing it, be driven and directed by those very distortions I am trying to see. And they remain invisible. In the more indirect approach, on the other hand, what seems to happen, from time to time, as the muddy waters of the busy, ego-driven mind settle and become clear, is this: Out of the corner of my eye, so to speak, I began to catch sight and be aware of distortions and aberrations in myself. Sometimes the very frequency of certain kinds of obtrusive thoughts which enter uninvited into this quiet is a revelation.

There is also another side to this self-knowledge, a more positive side. From the vantage point of the "recollected" observer, whose unconscious desires are no longer initiating trains of thought, and who is just watching, more is seen than just the silly game of "the ego." As I become more comfortable in this alert restfulness, it becomes clear that this quiet center, my true self, the image of God, is something of marvelous beauty. So I begin to make friends with myself; I begin to "like myself," as psychological guides put it. But this too is not the result of some deliberate program to talk myself into liking myself. It happens more indirectly. By just "hanging out" with this self, it slowly dawns on me what richness and beauty there is at my deep center, by whatever name it is called. This deep center is saturated with divinity. As Thomas Merton used to insist, it is that place within me where I am most in God and, precisely because of that, most fully my true self.

This mode of coming to self-knowledge and "discerning the spirits" is in no way unknown in or alien to the Christian tradition. But recent centuries have put greater stress on the "head-on" approach. I merely point out that specific practices which I have learned from Asian religious traditions seem to have helped me to deepen that kind of awareness.



## The Body and Spiritual Growth

Another dimension of spiritual growth which has been affected by my "turning East" has to do with the body. On two counts one would expect Western Christians to take the body seriously. First of all, consider the "materialism" of the West and the countless variety of wares peddled by the advertising media which urge us to be concerned with the health, beauty, and comfort of our bodies. Was there ever a time or place that outdid us in this respect? Secondly, above all, Christianity has to do with God embodied. The Incarnation is the central mystery of at least Catholic Christianity. It celebrates Christmas, the resurrected *body*, the eucharistic *body*, the mystical *body*. On both counts, both as modern Westerners and as Christians, one might expect us in prayer and meditation to give much attention to the body. The Orient, on the other hand, has a reputation among Westerners for being ethereal, "spiritual," and disembodied.

Yet, strange as it may at first seem, in Asian psychospiritual practice the attention given to the body is much greater than among most Western Christians. Practically all of the Western care and concern for the body is directed to it as an object, something we deal with from the outside, so to speak. The East, on the other hand, experiences it much more from within, experiences the bodiliness of subjectivity. Indeed, the normal starting point in Oriental meditative practice is some kind of bodily awareness. When they come to prayer or meditation Western Christians, for all their talk of Incarnation, tend to disregard the body and immediately deal with ideas and things "spiritual." I have been much helped by Eastern practices toward repossessing my body and working with and through it as an instrument and locus of prayer, meditation, and growth. Yoga, breathing awareness, and body awareness have been especially helpful in this respect. They bring me into immediate, lively, nonconceptual here-and-now awareness and are a natural doorway into that divine presence which is without words or concepts. Such an awareness, after all, is not something exotic or unusual. I think that it is the rare adult who has never had this simple experience of a deeper presence, which is more immediate than words or ideas, in his own embodied self or in the cosmos. Contemplation is a normal human activity. So what I am mainly saying here is that the practices I have learned from the East, far from conflicting with my Christian sense of Incarnation, have supported and deepened it with very helpful practices.



## The Person in Buddhism and Christianity

In my study of Zen and the *Spiritual Exercises* to which I referred at the beginning of this paper, there is a brief theological examination of the concept of person, particularly in Buddhism and Christianity.<sup>18</sup> I will not repeat that discussion here, but will deal with the issue from a more empirical, "personal," and psychological perspective.

When we begin to talk about person and personality, we are once again faced with a bewildering variety of meanings given to these words. For my present purpose I think it best to steer around those complications if I can, and stay as close as possible to ordinary language.

Perhaps the simplest way to put it is that I have experienced a growth in unity, harmony, and wholeness in myself. Not that the process is complete by any means, but both my own awareness of myself and what others tell me lead me to believe that I have not suffered a diminishment of personality. Sometimes I pick up from the remarks of Westerners the suspicion that Eastern practices lead to the deadening of the person and the suppression of personality. All I can say is that it does not seem to be true in my case. I feel more freed of "personality" in the sense of a costume or mask (*persona*, after all, does mean mask), but more fully myself at a level beyond roles and others' expectations. To put it another way, I feel less and less a part of mass-man, less and less an impersonal cog in some organization's machine, whether political, ecclesiastical, or whatever.

How much of that is the natural flowering over half a century of my Christian inheritance, in which I am a free person God calls by name, and how much of it can be attributed to the practices and attitudes I have learned from the East? I do not know. The combination of both has something to do with how I experience it. Maybe the saying of Jesus applies here which says that finding is losing, and losing is finding (Matt. 10:39). In any case, I do not feel that through the practices I have incorporated into my life in recent years I have lost my personality or "person" in the sense of becoming a colorless, impersonal essence. Quite the contrary.

## Nonconceptual Experience and the Spiritual Exercises

As you can see, this paper is mostly about myself, and only incidentally about the *Spiritual Exercises* and their history and nature. But I cannot refrain from pointing out one fact which I have become more keenly aware of

during this process in recent years. I have discovered, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I have come to realize more clearly, the degree to which interior, intuitive, nonrational, nonconceptual experience is at the heart of the Ignatian Exercises. What else should we expect if we take note of this decisive event in Ignatius' life described in his *Autobiography*:

As he went along occupied with his devotions, he sat down for a little while with his face toward the river which was running deep. While he was seated there, the eyes of his understanding began to be opened; though he did not see any vision, he understood and knew many things, both spiritual things and matters of faith and of learning, and this was with so great an enlightenment that everything seemed new to him. Though there were many, he cannot set forth the details that he understood then, except that he experienced a great clarity in his understanding. This was such that in the whole course of his life, through sixty-two years, even if he gathered up all the many helps he had had from God and all the many things he knew and added them together, he does not think they would amount to as much as he had received at that one time.<sup>19</sup>

It is one of the ironies of history that--even though at their origin in the sixteenth century the *Exercises* were mistrusted and attacked because of their appeal to the experience "of the creature directly with its Creator and Lord," and although Ignatius was cross-examined by the Inquisition and even temporarily imprisoned, more than once, on that account--in later centuries, including our own, the *Exercises* came to be despised by many as no more than a manual of routines imposed on the mind and will after the manner of a military drill. A sad bit of irony. Fortunately, recent scholarship and renewed practice have begun to restore a mode of giving the Exercises which is more faithful to their origins.<sup>20</sup>

One of the mainstays of the Exercises is contemplative visualization of the events of the life of Jesus. Most of the Eastern practices I have worked with have more to do with awareness than with fantasy or visualization. But I have come to discover that the two are closely related. If I preface one of these "contemplations" with a fairly extensive period of some kind of centering and awareness exercises,<sup>21</sup> the vividness and power of the "contemplation" is much greater. If I hurry into it without this preparation, it is often impossible to "get into" the scene. The preliminary awareness preparation might be five or ten minutes, it might be half an hour--as much as is necessary to still the agitation of mind and feelings, so that I can be free to respond to the scene or event of Jesus' life. In workshops and retreats I always recommend to the participants that, even if



they do not feel at home with awareness meditation as their primary practice, but continue with meditation (à la Guigo II) or "contemplation" as their main fare, they nevertheless *always* begin their meditation or prayer with some kind of awareness practice. I even recommend that they normally begin with some hatha yoga or its equivalent, to still the mind by stilling the body,<sup>22</sup> and then do some other awareness exercise before moving to the meditation or "contemplation."

### Bodily Positions in Prayer

A word about bodily positions in prayer. Ignatius probably pays more attention to this aspect of prayer than most Western Christian teachers, but even what he says is far less specific than what I learned from Eastern practices. He wisely suggests that we experiment and find out what position suits us best; sitting, kneeling, standing, lying on our back or on our stomach. He recommends that we stay with the position which we find works at a given time. But he does not give specific recommendations. Eastern teachers, on the other hand, have experimented for literally thousands of years with a wide variety of bodily postures, and, while allowing for individual variation, are willing to recommend certain specific bodily postures as more suitable than others. Sitting with a straight back, they say, to take the most constantly proffered suggestion, is one of the most helpful positions for maintaining that relaxed alertness and watchful quiet out of which prayer and meditation usually grow. I tried it and have found it to be true for myself. It took me a little while to get used to it, but it is now for me by far the most helpful bodily position for most meditation and prayer. At times, for certain kinds of prayer, particularly those which involve the expression of strong feelings, I find other positions and appropriate movements a help. I find prostration and even pounding the floor, for instance, appropriate for moods of helplessness and frustration. Here we begin to move closer to areas in which the interrelation of spirituality and contemporary humanistic and transpersonal psychology can begin to develop.

### "Fully Alive"

That is a good note on which to end, because it is precisely the area in which I have been working for the past year. When my sabbatical came



round again in the summer of 1980, I once again looked for a project which would build on my past experience but would at the same time plunge me into something fresh and new for me. The earlier sabbatical (1973-74) had expanded a narrower Catholic-Protestant ecumenism into a larger circle embracing the ancient tradition of Hinduism and Buddhism. This time I took that (more or less) integrated whole, which I have given the label of spirituality, and I began to explore the ways in which the resources of contemporary psychology, particularly humanistic and transpersonal psychology, can be integrated into it. This integration must take place first of all, I believe, in my own personal understanding and practice. Eventually, then, it is my hope that it will help me to assist others in actualizing the ideal proposed by St. Irenaeus in the second century A.D.: "The glory of God is the human person fully alive."<sup>23</sup>

### Epilogue

Just before he left for Asia in 1968, Thomas Merton conversed with the Fellows of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions at Santa Barbara.<sup>24</sup> He stressed the need we have in our time to become universal persons. It seems that this is not likely to happen unless there is serious sharing between men and women of different traditions. It is even difficult to see what our own tradition is like unless we can somehow get outside of it. Merton further stressed that this sharing is most effective if it is on the level of experiences, not simply of doctrines and ideas. This calls for a willingness from all of the partners to such an enterprise, whether they be Christians or Hindus, Jesuits, Zen Buddhists, or whatever else, to open themselves and their deepest experience to one another. Such a process fosters personal growth and development, for through the heightened personal awareness it evokes, cross-traditional sharing surely brings about growth in contemplative practice both theoretically and experientially. It can enrich the diverse traditions as they complement each other. Such an enterprise calls for honest and truthful self-revelation from those of us who commit ourselves to this process. It is not without its risks. But what comes of it for ourselves and future generations will be more than worth what it demands of us.

# FOOTNOTES

- 1 Daniel J. O'Hanlon, S.J., "Zen and the Spiritual Exercises: A Dialogue between Faiths," *Theological Studies*, XXXIX, no. 4 (1978), 737-768. See also a brief popular article in *The Yoga Journal*, no. 23 (Sept.-Oct., 1978), pp. 31-35.
- 2 I had the good fortune of being actively involved in the work of the Council as part of the staff of the Secretariat for Christian Unity. A sample sentence showing the openness of the Council toward learning from other religious traditions is found in the decree on missions: "Let them reflect attentively on how Christian religious life may be able to assimilate the ascetic and contemplative traditions whose seeds were sometimes already planted by God in various cultures prior to the preaching of the gospel" (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, no. 18, in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. W. M. Abbott, S.J. [New York: America Press, 1966], p. 607).
- 3 The highlights of this year of experience are presented in a series of seven articles in the *National Catholic Reporter*, July 18, 1975, through September 19, 1975.
- 4 For an account of that experience, see my "Six Weeks in a Yoga Camp," *America*, Feb. 14, 1976, pp. 113-116.
- 5 I like the Penguin paperback edition edited by Clifton Wolters, perhaps because it is the first one I read. Two other excellent translations are those of Ira Progoff (New York: Julian Press, 1957) and William Johnston, S.J., in the Image Books (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1973).
- 6 A good translation is *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1973).
- 7 In the Asian tradition the restless monkey is often taken as the image of our restless, scattered mind. Sometimes the example is heightened by adding some extras like: an insane monkey, a drunken monkey, a monkey stung by a hundred wasps. St. Teresa of Avila refers to the "monkey mind" as "the fool in the house."
- 8 *The Ladder of Monks: A Letter on the Contemplative Life and Twelve Meditations* trans. by Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (Garden City: Doubleday Image Books, 1978), pp. 92-93.
- 9 *Sadhana: A Way to God. Christian Exercises in Eastern Form* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), pp. 24-31.
- 10 Many theological questions need to be raised and clarified about precisely what this "Heart" is. For the purposes of this present essay, perhaps it is enough to let it stand as the name for what awakens when we are able to still the "monkey mind." The fact is documented abundantly. A satisfactory theological explanation is something further. I suspect that various acceptable Christian theologies will deal with this issue in different ways.
- 11 When used properly and deliberately, thoughts, words, and especially images can be very fruitful for prayer. But in *this* kind of prayer, and when the thoughts, words, and images are not invited, but compulsive intruders,



they become encumbrances. There are some shrewd observations about this in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, especially in chapter 7. Abbot Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O., also has some perceptive reflections on this issue in "Cultivating the Centering Prayer," *Review for Religious*, XXXVII, no. 1 (1978), 10-15.

- 12 *Sadhana*, p. 27.
- 13 "Psychology and the Christian Mystical Tradition," in Charles Tart, ed., *Transpersonal Psychologies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 424.
- 14 See Mary M. Watkins, *Waking Dreams* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977) and Ira Progoff, *The Symbolic and the Real* (New York: Julian Press, 1963).
- 15 Charles Tart, "States of Consciousness and State-specific Sciences," *Science*, 176 (1972), pp. 1203-1210.
- 16 *Summa Theologiae*, I, Q. 1, a. 8).
- 17 Sometimes contemplation is charged with bringing about an unacceptable individualism. The development of liberation theology and the growing Jesuit emphasis on faith that does justice have heightened our sensitivity to this danger. There are certainly spurious styles of practice which can go under the name of contemplation and which deserve this kind of criticism. But authentic contemplation is the precise opposite of autonomous individualistic egocentricity. Thomas Merton, a pioneer in sensitizing us to injustice and oppression, had this to say: "He who attempts to act and do things for others without deepening his own self-understanding, freedom, and capacity to love, will not have anything to give to others. He will communicate to them nothing but the contagion of his own obsessions, his aggressiveness, his ego-centered ambitions, his delusions about ends and means, his doctrinaire prejudices and ideas" (*Contemplation in a World of Action* [Garden City: Doubleday Image Books, 1973], pp. 178-179).
- 18 On pp. 763-766 of the article referred to in footnote 1 above.
- 19 *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola with Related Documents*, translated by Joseph F. O'Callaghan and edited with Introduction and Notes by John C. Olin (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 39-40.
- 20 See Harvey Egan's *The Spiritual Exercises and the Ignatian Mystical Horizon* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1976), especially chapter 2 on "consolation without previous cause," and also his bibliographical references.
- 21 The first section of Anthony de Mello's *Sadhana* (see fn. 9 above), pp. 9-56 on "Awareness," is an excellent introduction and guide to this practice.
- 22 Alice Christenson and David Rankin, *Easy Does It Yoga* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978) is an easy and sound guide for this practice.
- 23 *Adversus Haereses*, Book IV, ch. 20, section 7.
- 24 In the recording "The Final Words of Thomas Merton" (Santa Barbara: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1971), Phonotape no. 454.



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